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Assessing authentically – learnings from marketing educators

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ABSTRACT
This paper demonstrates the importance and role of authentic assessments, that replicate industry practice, within Higher Education marketing programmes. We answer the call from employers, that students need to gain much-needed employability skills, and we illustrate how such assessments can be created to enable the development of employability skills. We provide an overview of four case studies, to illustrate different forms of authentic assessments, the theory which was used to underpin the designs, the skills developed during the assessments, and the outcomes of the assessments. As we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced a move to online assessments, it is timely that we reflect on the value of authentic assessments and adjust our practice.

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Introduction

This paper argues that for some time, traditional assessments have not been meeting all of students' needs as work-ready graduates, yet higher educational institutions (HEI) across the world have been tasked with producing such graduates that are 'employable' and that have the skills needed for future roles. Traditional assessments such as norm-referenced, closed-book formal tests have frequently been adopted on the assumption that they are a true measure of students' ability. However, over time, such assessment methods have been questioned, and a more constructivist learning environment through collaboration and access to authentic activities was called for (Herrington & Herrington, 1998). We argue that as HEIs and as marketing academics, we need to reframe assessments and focus on the use of authentic assessments to mirror what is happening in practice, and to resolve the tension between the need for graduate competences (such as knowledge, skills and attitudes), their development, and students graduating without them. It is noted that authentic assessments are often missing from the curricula, yet these are needed to replicate tasks and standards required for the world of work (Villarroel et al., 2018). Indeed, we argue that as educators, we have a major role to play in preparing our students to be career-

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ready marketers and managers of the future, and therefore we have a duty to ensure that authentic assessments are included within programmes in order to prepare our students for the future world of work (Storey et al., 2019).

Research suggests that a gap persists between marketing education content and marketing industry requirements (Schlee & Karns, 2017; Wymbs, 2011). According to Wellman (2010b), marketing educators need to consider two specific issues when teaching marketing; one, to recognise and to address the gap between marketing theory and practice, the other, to consider competences required for a career in marketing – not just subject-oriented competences but others such as business and personal.

We summarise that authentic assessments not only improve students' learning experiences but also equip students with the essential skills necessary for their future professional life (or employability skills) (Sokhanvar et al., 2021). The Institute of Student Employers (ISE, 2021) recently expressed their support for authentic assessments, as the use of authentic assessments are found to enhance a students' learning experience through the application of marketing knowledge in a realistic situation (O'Connor et al., 2019).

This transition into the authentic assessment arena will not be without its challenges for HEIs and its academics. Therefore, this paper reflects on the importance of authentic assessment within the HEI context, how to move beyond traditional assessments towards authentic assessment practice, and how to move this under-researched area in marketing pedagogy forward and away from traditional submissions (Barber et al., 2013). We demonstrate how authentic assessments can be incorporated into marketing programmes and how such assessments provide marketing students with the employability skills required in the workplace (Owston & York, 2018).

During the Academy of Marketing Conference 2021, a workshop was convened by two of the authors, with a call for papers highlighting examples of digital and innovative authentic assessment. Four case studies were submitted and presented at the workshop highlighting the diversity of authentic assessment taking place in HEI worldwide. After the workshop, the authors of the case studies came together with the two conveners to analyse the case studies further and to develop this paper aimed at helping fellow marketing academics in designing and implementing authentic assessments in their programmes and modules.

The analysis of the case studies highlights how a range of different forms of authentic assessments can be used to encourage students to develop a range of skills and attitudes needed in their professional lives through the application of their knowledge to complex real-world problems (Gulikers et al., 2004). We show how each of the four assessments meet the requirements of an authentic assessment and how they are aimed at developing a range of competences, including knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Next, the paper presents a literature review and engages in the debate on the purpose of HEIs in addressing the employability skills gap, authentic and traditional assessment forms and purpose, and the role of authentic assessment in enhancing the employability skills of marketing students. The methodological approach to analysing the four case studies is then considered, followed by the findings and a discussion structured in relation to the case studies and to the previous literature. The paper concludes with a summary of the key contributions to literature and pedagogical practice, acknowledges limitations of the study, and makes valuable suggestions for future research.

Literature review

Setting the context

HEIs globally have been, and still are, under pressure to contribute to the employability of the graduate labour supply (Abelha et al., 2020; Jamieson & Naidoo, 2004), with increasing emphasis on students attaining soft and transferable skills by employers and governments (Wilton, 2008). For example, within the UK, this began with the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) and was confirmed more recently by the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework and the Destination of Leavers in the HE survey (Gov UK, 2016). In 1997, outside of the UK, the OECD launched the DeSeCo Project (Defining and Selecting Key Competences) (DeSeCo, 2016), and across the EU the Lisbon Strategy was launched to ensure EU countries and citizens became competitive and capable in the emerging knowledge-based society (Dachsel et al., 2006). Since then, the EU has launched other frameworks focusing on building transferable skills and competences by HEIs such as the Digital Competence Framework, the Entrepreneurship Competence Framework, and the Green Competences Framework (Bianchi et al., 2022; EUROCIRCLE, 2022; European Commission, 2022).

According to Wellman (2010b), marketing educators need to consider two specific issues when teaching marketing for employability: firstly, to recognise and to address the gap between marketing theory and practice, and secondly, to consider competences required for a career in marketing, not just subject-oriented competences but also others such as entrepreneurial and autonomous thinking, leadership, creativity, and technology/media literacy. Despite the on-going focus of the wider HEI sector and business schools, including marketing departments, to deliver employable graduates (Jackson et al., 2013), key stakeholders still argue that despite such investment, graduates do not have the required skills to indeed be employable. The World Economic Forum (2020) and QS (2019) identify that graduates do not have the work-ready skills of critical thinking, analysis, creativity, and active learning. Yet these skills are likely to be in high demand as jobs change over the next five years, due to the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and businesses transitioning towards carbon net zero due to the climate emergency, causing the graduate market to become more competitive (Fuller, 2021).

Marketing education research has found that gaps persist between what is taught and what is required by the marketing industry (Schlee & Karns, 2017; Wymbs, 2011). Barker (2014) identifies three sets of skills sought by employers of new marketing graduates, which are professional competencies, business skills, and personal attributes. Salesforce's (2022) survey shows that only 31% of Gen Z respondents, so-called digital natives, believed that they had the advanced level of digital skills required by employers. Practitioners have also found graduates' writing skills to be below par in their work, requiring it to be checked for spelling mistakes (Wymbs, 2011). Many HEIs therefore appear to be falling behind in preparing their students adequately for employment, with studies corroborating that a gap persists between marketing education content and industry marketing requirements (Schlee & Karns, 2017; Wymbs, 2011).

We argue that one way to bridge this gap and for students to develop the skills which marketing employers are looking for is through the use of authentic assessment. Using authentic assessments mirrors the workplace by bringing together marketing theory, concepts and the skills to apply these to the practice of marketing, and therefore

responds to the calls to ensure that students are actually workplace-ready (Jackson et al., 2013; Succi & Canovi, 2020). Somerville (2019) supports this view and argues that *someone* (authors' emphasis) needs to take responsibility for this lack of skill development, and we argue that by focusing on making assessments reflective of the real challenges presented in the workplace, that we marketing educators are indeed taking responsibility.

The development of authentic assessment: an overview

Before we discuss the characteristics of authentic assessment and how it contributes to building employability skills, we first need to define it and distinguish it from traditional assessment. We define authentic assessment as an assessment that 'requires students to use the same competences, or combinations of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, that they need to apply in the criterion situation in professional life' (Gulikers et al., 2004, p. 69). Traditional assessments are those that focus on subject-specific knowledge transmission by requiring students to learn and memorise facts and then being assessed through standardised tests or closed-book exams (Janesick, 2001). In an attempt to clarify the distinction between the two types of assessment, Wiggins (1990) drew direct comparisons between the two (Table 1).

Whilst Wiggins' (1990) comparison of authentic and traditional types of assessment is helpful in clarifying the distinctions between the two types, it presents the two types of assessments as distinct forms. In contrast, Mueller (2005) proposes a continuum where authentic assessment can be distinguished from traditional assessment in terms of their defining attributes (Figure 1 below). It is to Mueller's (2005) view of a continuum that we subscribe, and propose that the authentic assessments which we present in this research are on this continuum towards the authentic end. Further consideration of the characteristics is present below after our critique of traditional marketing assessments.

Traditional marketing assessment – a critique

Before we consider the characteristics and use of authentic assessment in marketing education, we need to highlight the potential issues raised by more traditional assessments, especially in relation to their ability to develop the real-world skills that new

Table 1. A comparison of authentic and traditional assessment (adapted from Wiggins (1990)).

Authentic Assessment	Traditional Assessment
Direct examination of student performance on worthy intellectual tasks	Relies on indirect or proxy items
Requires students to be effective performers with acquired knowledge	Reveals only whether students can recognise, recall or "plug in" what was learned out of context
Presents the student with a full array of tasks	Conventional tests are usually limited to pencil-and-paper, one-answer questions
Attends to whether the student can craft polished, thorough and justifiable answers, performances or products	Conventional tests typically only ask the student to select or write correct responses—irrespective of reasons
Achieves validity and reliability by emphasising and standardising the appropriate criteria for scoring varied products	Traditional testing standardises objective "items" and the one "right" answer for each
"Test validity" should depend in part upon whether the test simulates real-world "tests" of ability	Test validity is determined by matching items to curriculum content
Involves ill-structured challenges that help students rehearse for the complex ambiguities of professional life	Traditional tests are more like drills, assessing static and, too often, arbitrary elements of those activities

Figure 1. Continuum of assessments (Mueller, 2005).

marketing graduates require. Sambell et al. (2019) summarises that assessments must be fair, reliable, valid, and authentic. However, as Medland (2016) points out, traditional assessments are often not viewed as such and have consistently been raised as an area of concern by both academics and students alike and thus there is a compelling need for change. Indeed, the UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA, 2003, 2014, 2018) have long maintained that assessments need a fundamental change. However, assessments' practices still seem to be lacking innovation and development (Sambell, 2016).

While traditional assessments continue to have a place in higher education, we see four key challenges in relation to marketing education. Firstly, standard tests that focus on recalling key facts (for example closed-book exams) often do not reflect the modern workplace and the skills required, such as relationship building or collaborative working (Rovai, 2000). Rather, such assessments tend to lead to the testing of a superficial level of knowledge acquisition (Lynam & Cachia, 2018). Indeed, Libman (2010) argues that students must stop merely being consumers of knowledge and become those who can produce knowledge.

Secondly, there has been an assumption that traditional tests are a true measure of a student's capability and learning journey (Herrington & Herrington, 1998), which has been disproven by extant research. The QAA (2018) argue that with traditional tests, academics become the gatekeepers of key knowledge and therefore restrict access to students rather than offering them a more collaborative approach. Taking a constructivist perspective, traditional assessments do not allow for students to take an active learning approach (Vygotsky, 1978). With access to information via Google, for example, and fast-changing marketing practice, the retention of large amounts of specific knowledge is no longer required.

Thirdly, when case studies are discussed in class, the problem under examination lacks contextualisation and does not take into account the inherent complexity of 'real-world' marketing problems, and therefore is lacks real-life application and does not mirror industry practice (Colthorpe et al., 2021). Problem analysis, when solely reliant on one textbook/case study and with only one answer, becomes abstract and therefore meaningless with regard to skill development (Herrington et al., 2004). Furthermore, along with modularisation, assessments become fragmented and siloed with little real-world contextualisation (Sambell, 2016). We note that marketing textbook cases may be quite contextually removed from students' lives – for example working on a case of Walmart or another global organisation can sometimes seem very unrelatable to students and

their lived experiences. We argue that authentic assessments, which for example focus on addressing marketing challenges of local businesses, will allow students to use their imagination and come up with creative solutions (Birenbaum et al., 2006; Frederiksen & Knudsen, 2017).

Finally, traditional assessments may cause discontentment amongst many students who feel that such a standardised assessment means that they lack the opportunity to demonstrate the skills needed by the industry, such as creativity, which is critical to the study of marketing (McIntyre et al., 2003). In fact, we argue that traditional assessments may directly suppress any sense of employability skill development (Sternberg, 2012). Therefore, as marketing educators, we need to consider how to create authentic assessments to ensure that students can both apply knowledge and develop skills for marketing practice (Ma et al., 2018; Wellman, 2010a).

For the last two decades, we acknowledge there has been a move away from traditional assessments to student-centred active learning (Rovai, 2000). We therefore propose that, as marketing educators, we need to go even further and ensure that students have opportunities that allow them to engage in complex, meaningful and real-world tasks which enable them to acquire the much-needed employability skills such as collaboration, critical thinking and communication skills (Wagner, 2008), by incorporating authentic assessments into teaching and learning strategies.

Characteristics and types of authentic assessments

As presented above, fundamentally, an authentic assessment aims to ensure that students understand and apply marketing theory to current marketing problems and challenges in a 'real rather than purely theoretical' way and aims to 'help students to develop strategies for applying knowledge and solving problems' (McConlogue, 2020, p. 37). The key principle is that authenticity helps students understand the complexity of work, contextualise their own skills, and allows them to develop new work-ready skills (Akister et al., 2000; Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014).

The core characteristics of an authentic assessment are that they contain (1) realism – linked with everyday life and work; (2) contextualisation – knowledge which can be applied in an analytical and thoughtful way to a specific context; and (3) problematisation – what is learned can be used to solve a problem or meet a need (Benner et al., 2009; Raymond et al., 2013). Students therefore use the same skills and knowledge to address the assessment that would be required in the workplace (Gulikers et al., 2004). According to Mohamed and Lebar (2017), authentic assessments are realistic, complex in cognitive aspects and performance-based, and we observe this view is corroborated by a number of other researchers who highlight such characteristics in their research. These are summarised in Table 2.

In the context of professional training, for instance in nursing or teaching, the link between assessment and real-world professional activities is particularly critical. As such, an understanding of situations which will be encountered in the field after graduation is an essential element of authentic assessment in such contexts (Frey et al., 2012). Thus, in addition to reading and observation, learning and assessment activities also *integrate* and *replicate* real-world tasks to be *done* by students. However, despite business schools teaching real-world subjects, they tend to largely focus on traditional methods such as

Table 2. Characteristics of the context of authentic assessments.

Realistic	Complex in Cognitive Aspects	Performance-Based
Reflects industry practice(s) (Gulikers et al., 2004)	Cognitively challenging (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014; Villarroel et al., 2018)	Reflective and evaluative (Lingard et al., 2003; Villarroel et al., 2018)
In line with tasks and requirements in real life (Frey et al., 2012)	Assess procedural knowledge, problem solving, collaboration and motivation (Borich & Tombari, 2004)	Measure students' skills as required in the real world (Whitlock & Nanavati, 2013)
Knowledge and understanding is assessed based on what happens in real life (Aitken & Pungur, 2005)	Assess higher-order thinking skills (Mohamed & Lebar, 2017)	Tasks demonstrate use of knowledge and skills that are meaningful (Mueller, 2005)
Assess learning that students might carry out in the real world. (Lajoie, 1991)	Tasks stress depth more than breadth (Wiggins, 1989b)	Performance is assessed in a context encountered in real life (Diez & Moon, 1992)
Emphasises the connections between assessment, learning and real-world issues (Green, 1998)	The assessment should be cognitively challenging (Ajjawi et al., 2020)	Assessment serves students well for self-evaluation (McMann & McMann, 1992)
The task should be representative of what happens in the field (Wiggins, 1989a)		Assessment product has meaning or value beyond success in the classroom (Wiggins, 2006)
Refers to the 'fidelity' of the task and to the conditions under which the performance would normally occur (Reeves & Okey, 1996)		Assessment should encourage students' reflexivity and should promote students' capabilities to evaluate the quality of their work (Ajjawi et al., 2020)
Activities should reflect actual practices of a profession (Ajjawi et al., 2020)		

essays and closed-book exams, and as we have previously argued, these traditional forms of assessments are often not reflective of today's marketing activities and practice.

It is not a simple process to enable students to understand workplace activities nor to enable students to gain the much-needed employability skills. Using digital marketing as an example, there is a gap between digital marketing knowledge taught in a lecture and the skills required to operationalise that knowledge in a real-world setting (Langan et al., 2019; Royle & Laing, 2014). Students may be able to recall Chaffey and Smith's (2022) theory of social media marketing in an exam but this may not result in them having the skills to actually be able to apply social media marketing to effectively reach a target customer. As authentic assessments are found to enhance a students' learning experience in the application of marketing knowledge in a realistic situation (O'Connor et al., 2019) and 'help students to develop strategies for applying knowledge and solving problems' (McConlogue, 2020, p. 37), it is essential that we include such assessments in our marketing programme curricula.

Closing this gap presents a challenge to marketing educators and is reflected in the relative dearth of research in authentic assessment in marketing education. As marketing educators have sought to find new approaches to close the gap between the expectations of employers and skills taught in marketing classes, assessments have started to focus on higher-order thinking skills. The limited number of studies that have examined authentic assessment in the marketing discipline have largely addressed the use of business simulations as the main education tool for delivering the authentic elements of a marketing assessment rather than showcasing a variety of authentic assessments (Farrell, 2020; Tuten, 2009; Vos, 2015). According to Lombardi and Oblinger (2007, p. 6), it is authentic learning activities that expose students to 'the

messiness of real-life decision making'. Whilst simulations are only one form of authentic assessment, we show through our case studies that there are alternative ways to assess marketing students authentically.

Embedding employability skills within authentic assessments

When designing an authentic assessment, it is important to consider the knowledge, skills and attributes that students need to gain from taking part in the assessment. Extant literature (such as Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014; Gulikers et al., 2004) emphasises the connection between authentic assessment and the development of the key abilities, skills and behaviours that will be required of students once in employment. These are often referred to not only as employability skills but also soft skills, work-ready skills, 21st century skills or transferable skills. These are essentially life skills – skills that are imperative for citizens of this world to cultivate (Horey et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed two critical factors that have propelled these attributes to the forefront of learning curricula (Gill, 2020; Kucina et al., 2020). Firstly, it showed how we are now global citizens, and we need to learn how to think and act for the welfare of our global society. Secondly, the pandemic exposed how reliant we are on technology for our economies, communities, and societies to continue engaging, trading, and relating to one another.

It is important that we formalise the development of employability skills. Often, students do practise many employability skills during their subject-specific continuous assessment work, but they are not assessed on them (Jackson et al., 2013; Jopp, 2020). For example, students inevitably practice and gain employability skills to some extent through group work, presentations, and problem-based learning assignments. Gibb (2014, p. 456) contends it is vital 'structure, enhance and enable' three inter-connected touchpoints in education, namely 'personal development, participation in learning, and success in employment'. We are therefore proposing authentic assessment as a means by which to integrate subject-specific learning whilst honing students' soft skills.

Many of the learning skills frameworks integrated into education systems across the world today can be interpreted as a distillation of what came to be known as 21st-century skills. In 2002, these skills were organised into a list of twelve abilities collated by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning, or P21 (Boss, 2019). Subsequently, Wagner (2008, p. xxv) introduced his Seven Survival Skills for 21st century learners, to offer a framework close to what he referred to as 'the global achievement gap'. Table 3 visually exhibits the graduate skills frameworks identified since the OECD DeSeCo Project 26 years ago to the current day.

It is evident from the emerging literature (van Laar et al., 2017) that from the turn of this century there has been ongoing recognition that the world is changing rapidly, and therefore what and how we teach and assess, needs to move with it (Horey et al., 2018). By aligning the twelve 21st century skills devised in 2002 alongside a current list of top employability skills required by employers in the business sector (as listed on the world's largest professional online network, LinkedIn), the results shine a spotlight on the frequent criticism of the current higher education system and how it is still not adequately preparing graduates for the workplace (QS, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2020).

The 21st-century skills deficit was pre-empted over two decades ago, and yet there is still a demand for graduates to hone almost the exact same abilities today (Schlee & Karns, 2017).

Table 3. Graduate skills frameworks.

1997 OECD DeSeCo Project	2002 21st Century Skills	2008 Wagner's 7 Survival Skills	2023 Categorisation of twelve 21st Century Skills
1. Interacting in socially heterogeneous groups	1. Collaboration 2. Communication 3. Social skills	1. Collaboration across networks and leading by influence 2. Effective oral & written communication	**Learning Skills (The 4 C's)** 1. Critical Thinking 2. Creativity 3. Collaboration 4. Communication
2. Acting autonomously	4. Critical thinking 5. Initiative 6. Productivity	3. Critical thinking & problem-solving 4. Initiative & entrepreneurship	**Literacy Skills** 5. Information 6. Media 7. Technology
3. Using tools effectively	7. Information literacy 8. Media literacy 9. Technology literacy 10. Creativity 11. Flexibility 12. Leadership	5. Accessing & Analysing information 6. Curiosity & Imagination 7. Agility & adaptability	**Life Skills** 8. Flexibility 9. Leadership 10. Initiative 11. Productivity 12. Social skills

So, why is there still a discrepancy? We concur with Jopp (2020) that the issue lies in the complexity of not just teaching employability skills, but more importantly in the ability of educators to elevate the importance of the skills through incorporation into their assessment briefs and rubrics. A well-designed authentic assessment should be comprised of tasks that 'necessitate personal and professional development', indeed it is a recognised component of the assignment (Harvey & Dodd, 2021, p. 2). It moves from prioritising subject-specific content, to elevating personal learning and growth (Harvey & Dodd, 2021, p. 2). Villarroel et al. (2018, p. 9) confirm that by assessing the higher-order skills needed for solving realistic and contextualised problems, we are enabling students to become 'good professionals and citizens'. So how can employability skills be developed and assessed through authentic assessment? We are going to focus on an example of developing digital skills (such as literacy and communication), a competency which can be linked to each item of the 21st Century skills (Table 3). Digital skills refer to the knowledge and technical skills required to be able to use *information and communication technologies (ICTs)* for effective and efficient information management, interpersonal communication, work collaboration, and to facilitate creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving (van Laar et al., 2017).

Maeroff (2004, p. 2) notes that the development of digital skills is a 'sea change not a fad', with students arriving at university having used technology during their earlier schooling as technology has become 'infused . . . [in] the entire curriculum' (Tondeur et al., 2016, p. 134). As suggested in a systematic literature review of 75 articles on the relationship between 21st century skills and digital skills (van Laar et al., 2017), graduates need to be literate in key digital skills. Importantly, digital skills are among the skills that are most in demand by employers and yet graduates are said to lack these (World Economic Forum, 2020). Thus, by developing students' digital citizenship (Becker et al., 2017), this allows them to showcase their digital employability skills to future employers (Tomlinson, 2010).

To prepare students for workplace success, education programmes, and, arguably, assessments should be developed to enhance students' digital skills in performing tasks

that are necessary in a broad range of occupations (van Laar et al., 2017). For example, many marketing educators have shared their experience of incorporating digital marketing certifications and digital badges provided by organisations such as Bing, HootSuite, Facebook, Google, HubSpot, LinkedIn Learning, and Twitter in different parts of the marketing programme, including authentic assessments, leading to students acquiring the necessary digital skills and effectively improving their employment prospects (Key et al., 2019; Laverie et al., 2020; Zahay et al., 2019). Despite the benefits, Spiller and Tuten (2019, p. 89) highlight that most certification programmes tend to focus on platform-specific skills and 'lower levels of learning objectives in Bloom's taxonomy'. We argue that just having a digital certification is insufficient, rather we need to also include digital skill development within authentic assessments which reflect the relevant skills needed (Sotiriadou et al., 2020). One key way in which to embed digital skills is to use a gamified online exercise to motivate students' engagement and learning (Smiderle et al., 2020). Online games have been found to have a strong effect on students' achievements and cognitive engagement, particularly in flipped learning (Lo & Hew, 2020).

In summary, we argue that as HEIs globally are being instructed to develop students' soft and transferable skills and yet simultaneously HEIs are accused of not doing this, it is time that we consider just how we can resolve this tension. Furthermore, as marketing educators, we need to ensure that students recognise the difference between theory and practice. Traditional assessments have a long history in HEIs and whilst they have their place, innovation is needed in marketing curricula. We demonstrate that given the rapidly changing world of work, exacerbated by the pandemic, how we assess also needs to change. Authentic assessments are one solution to ensuring that students develop their soft and transferable skills.

Research method

Case study research was chosen as the overarching methodological design aiming to illuminate the experiences of the marketing educators and HEIs involved (Stake, 2003; Yin, 2018). Case studies are a suitable methodology when a holistic and in-depth research approach is required (Tellis, 1997). This approach offers the opportunity for a range of assessments to be reviewed across four HEIs using a range of qualitative and quantitative methods (Yin, 2018). Baskarada (2014) notes that case studies are one of the most common methodologies and therefore, are appropriate when reviewing phenomena within a limited context. In this case, our limited context is defined as authentic assessment. Our research focuses on the real insight into higher education pedagogy associated with using authentic assessments in the digital era as experienced by marketing educators in HEIs in Asia (Hong Kong) and Europe (UK and Ireland).

Although generalisation from particular case studies is problematical, Tyler (2000) suggests that case studies make situations and facts accessible and relatable. Furthermore, Rashid et al. (2019) recommend that case studies are appropriate when viewing a naturally occurring context, such as observing the delivery and impact of authentic assessments within the context of an academic year, as it leads to identifying similarities in educators' own experiences and they can then decide on the appropriateness of adopting such practices in their teaching and learning strategies. Finally, this

paper follows Stake's (2003) approach of an instrumental case study whereby the aim is to gain an insight into the delivery of authentic assessments and the subsequent skills development.

Research settings and samples

Our research collaboration is the outcome of an Academy of Marketing Conference 2021 workshop on digital and innovative authentic assessments. Four case studies from internationally-based HEIs – University of Birmingham (UK), Royal Holloway, University of London (UK), Technological University Dublin (Ireland) and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Hong Kong) were presented at the workshop and subsequently formed the case studies for this paper. This extends prior research in this area where the sample strategy was limited to just one university in one country (James & Casidy, 2018). Details of each case study are presented in Table 4, and further information on each case as it relates to authentic assessment principles is presented in Appendix A.

Data generation and data analysis

The digital authentic assessments that this research centres on were carried out in the 2020–21 academic year. Research was approved by relevant university ethical committees (All European Academies, 2011; IUA, 2019). In all cases, further research and analysis was conducted only after students' consent was received after all grades were finalised. All identifying details were anonymised in line with ethical guidelines (Saunders et al., 2016).

After the workshop, each of the participating authors was initially involved in their own digital authentic assessment analysis using an inductive, 'bottom-up' approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Silverman, 2020), identifying common themes. At a later stage of the

Table 4. Data Sources.

Case study No.	HEI	Programme(s)/module(s), level	Topic of the assessment	No. & nature of digital assessments analysed
1	Royal Holloway, University of London	Marketing Strategy in Context (BSc in Business & Management)	Analysing a brand's marketing strategy	400 digital posters
2	University of Birmingham	Retail Marketing (MSc Marketing Suite)	Design and create their own retail store	40 group digital presentations (200 students)
3	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Digital Marketing Strategy - BA (Hons) in Marketing Search Engine Marketing - BA (Hons) in Marketing and Digital Strategy	Digital marketing strategy;Google ad certification	An average of 100 assessment items per semester (for 8 semesters across 4 cohorts)
4	Technological University Dublin	Strategic Marketing (MSc in Strategic Management).	Developing sustainable strategic marketing solutions aimed at practitioners	49 reflections & 49 short videos

analysis, we came together regularly between September 2021 until March 2022 to analyse and conceptualise data together (Silverman, 2020) via Zoom.

Findings

Designing authentic assessments

All the case studies met Mohamed and Lebar's (2017) three criteria of being realistic, complex in cognitive aspects, and performance-based. All case studies required students to demonstrate an understanding of the real world of marketing and its complexities and challenges, i.e. they were realistic, by creating content that represented the real work (Villarroel et al., 2018).

All four case studies were cognitively challenging in that they required students to apply relevant academic theory and principles to practice, and pushed them out of their comfort zones (Ashford-Rowe et al., 2014). Case study 2 required students to apply the relevant academic content to create their own store design. Case studies 1, 3 and 4 required students to apply the relevant academic knowledge that they had gained to analysing a current marketing strategy or sustainability issue and to make actionable recommendations for practice.

All of the four case studies addressed being performance-based and demonstrating their skills by requiring students to reflect industry practice in several ways (Gulikers et al., 2004). Case study 1 required students to select a brand of their choice and to reflect the brand's current strategic approach to marketing planning, thus mimicking tasks they would perform in their employment. Case study 2 required students to design their own concept store, replicating the work of a store design practitioner. Case study 3 required students to obtain professional digital marketing certifications by completing a range of micro-credential courses, again replicating the training and development a professional marketer would undertake. Finally, in case study 4, students were asked to reflect on UN SDG-related issues and link them with strategic marketing practice issues that would also be addressed by practitioners. All four assessments allowed students to develop a range of strategies for applying their knowledge to and solving problems for the different contexts (Benner et al., 2009; McConlogue, 2020; Raymond et al., 2013). The assessments linked the theoretical marketing concepts to the practice of the real work using the same competences, skills and knowledge that would be required in the real world (Akister et al., 2000; Gulikers et al., 2004; Villarroel et al., 2018).

Furthermore, whilst all four cases studies required students to reflect on their learning from the particular module (Lingard et al., 2003) (and in case study 3 the learning from the digital marketing certificates) to understand how their learning relates to practice in order to complete the assignments, this was predominately undertaken by the students as part of completing their assignment without formative or summative feedback. Only case study 4 required a reflective piece of writing as part of the assessment deliverables. After completing a sustainability literacy test, the Sulitest (UN supported self-assessment tool), the students completed a reflective piece using the DIEP framework, a model designed to organise reflective writing. The DIEP model (describe, interpret, evaluate and plan) helps the learner to move from descriptive and interpretative writing towards more evaluative reflection, and formulate a plan for the newly acquired information (Boud et al., 2013). In

this case, students used the DIEP framework to connect particular SDG issues to marketing practice but they also reflected on the implications for their own personal and professional lives.

In all four case studies, students were provided with an assessment rubric before they began their work, allowing them to continually evaluate and reflect upon their work against the marking criteria. For example, in case study 4, rubrics were set for a reflection piece and practitioner-focused LinkedIn video piece incorporating detailed grading items such as quality of chosen solution and connections to peer-reviewed and industry literature, quality of making connections with practice, actionable practitioner-focused call to action, execution of video, and reflection on LinkedIn video engagement. Additionally, in case study 2, students were working in groups which required each member of the group to not only evaluate their own work but also the work of their team members. In case study 1, students were required to review each other's work before this work was presented to a professional audience and they were also encouraged to evaluate their work against exemplars. Finally, in case study 3, through the use of gamification, students could continually evaluate their learning based on their performance in the game. From these assessments, the students were able to evaluate their own work, and the work of others in some of the cases, and appreciate what is an acceptable workplace standard (Villarroel et al., 2018).

Whilst all four of the case studies met the four criteria for authentic assessments, they did so in a number of different ways, highlighting the range of possibilities when designing authentic assessment. However, in line with Ashford-Rowe et al. (2014), all of the four assessments helped students to understand the complexities of work through replicating the types of work undertaken by marketing professionals, to contextualise their own skills through their reflections and evaluations, and finally to develop new work-ready skills, as we detail below.

Developing work-ready graduates

Following the categorisation of the twelve 21st century skills in Table 3 (Boss, 2019), the authors of this paper mapped the authentic assessments employed in their marketing programme. The design of the student assessment and the respective underpinning theories for each case study are summarised in Table 5, and furthermore illustrate how the 21st century skills were embedded and assessed to deliver the intended learning outcomes. Table 5 concludes with a brief consideration of the educator's observations of the authentic assessment process.

In addition, Table 6 provides a brief summary of the different categories of skills assessed in each case. Each case study assessed between four and nine of the twelve 21st century skills, and these were labelled as such in the marking rubrics. All of the assessments developed at least one skill from each of the three areas (learning, literacy and life skills), with learning and literacy skills tending to be more likely to be included in the design of the assessment than life skills.

To assess the students' critical thinking skills, as detailed above, all of the assessments required students to evaluate and apply relevant academic frameworks to practice. For example, in case study 1, students were required to apply a number of strategy frameworks such as PESTEL and SWOT, whilst in case 2, students needed to demonstrate how

Table 5. Summary of the case studies.

Case	Category	Student Assessment	Under-pinning Theory	Skills Embedded	Method of Assessment (Extract from Rubric)	Educator's observations of the authentic assessment process
1	Digital, authentic and creative	E-poster Students were tasked with creating a poster which depicted the marketing strategy of a brand chosen by each student.	Villarroel et al. (2018), Legget et al. (2014), Stegemann and Sutton-Brady (2009), and Hartman and Conklin (2021)	**Learning Skills** Critical thinking Creativity **Literacy Skills** Information gathering Technology **Life Skills** Productivity	**Critical thinking** Assessed through inquiry, through evaluation and application of relevant frameworks. **Creativity** Assessed through the creative design, layout and impact of the poster. Information gathering assessed through evidence of in-depth, independent research **Technology** Assessed through effective use of CANVA graphic design software **Productivity** assessed through the evidence of application of a fixed number of theoretical frameworks taught over a 10-week period.	• Higher than average attainment – grades compared to previous cohort with traditional assessment. • Increased engagement – as observed by workshop tutors in weekly workshop activities directly relating to the assessment. • Increased enjoyment - student evaluations cited 'I really enjoyed the assignment'. • Opportunity to demonstrate creativity - student evaluations cited 'I liked that we got to be creative'.

(*Continued*)

Table 5. (Continued).

Case	Category	Student Assessment	Under-pinning Theory	Skills Embedded	Method of Assessment (Extract from Rubric)	Educator's observations of the authentic assessment process
2	Digital, authentic and creative	Create and design a new and innovative concept retail store. Students needed to submit an 8-minute video comprising their concept design.	Cox et al. (2016), Kumar and Bhandarker (2017), Ma et al. (2018), Sotiriadou et al. (2020), and Villarroel et al. (2018)	**Learning Skills** Critical thinking Creativity Collaboration **Literacy Skills** Information gathering Technology Media **Life Skills** Productivity Initiative	**Critical Thinking** Innovative application of Store Design Principles to the store – demonstrating an understanding of digital innovations and the use of digital design tools Construction of Customer Experience Arguments – demonstrating an understanding of consumers' behaviour in a retail setting and how organisations can create a holistic experience **Information Gathering** Knowledge Acquisition of Store Design Principles – demonstrating substantial knowledge of store design theory **Creativity** Creativity and Innovation of the Presentation – showing innovation and vision around futuristic store design ideas **Collaboration** Group work - working together effectively in groups to create the store concept **Technology and Media** Digital presentation and submission via VLE – creating a media file that includes digital elements **Productivity** Task completion – ensuring that all deadlines are met and the assignment is submitted in accordance with the requirements **Initiative** New concept design – creating a novel store and generating ideas.	• Higher than average attainment - grades compared to previous cohort with traditional assessment. • New digital skills. • Video creation and editing, store layout design (CAD), graphic design, UI (User Interface) and UX (user experience) • Authentic experience of retail store design. • Collaborative teamwork • Mirrors industry practice and concept design. • Demonstration of creativity - 'Yes! I enjoyed that it allowed me to show my creativity rather than just writing an essay as normal. It allowed me and my group to show another side to our skills'. • New awareness of the variety of marketing roles – students' evaluations cited 'I got to know about marketing roles that I didn't know existed'. • 100% pass rate.

(*Continued*)

Table 5. (Continued).

Case	Category	Student Assessment	Under-pinning Theory	Skills Embedded	Method of Assessment (Extract from Rubric)	Educator's observations of the authentic assessment process
3	Digital, authentic	Online exercise using game-based learning platforms (e.g. Kahoot) Students competed with classmates for marks in the game.	Kim and Castelli (2021), Lo and Hew (2020), O'Connor et al. (2019), and Spiller and Tuten (2019)	**Learning Skills** Critical thinking **Literacy Skills** Media Technology **Life Skills** Productivity	**Critical thinking**: Demonstrate an integrated understanding of the topics, thorough & in-depth understanding & application of the concepts **Media** Demonstrate the ability in accessing and analysing digital media and related real-world business application **Technology** Demonstrate the ability in using various game-based learning and analytics tools **Productivity** Demonstrate the ability in providing right and reasonable answers to the cases, questions, or exercises under competition and time constraint	• Preferred assessment over traditional formats – students expressed this in the evaluations. • 100% in-class participation - attendance monitoring system data. • 100% pass rate of digital marketing certifications. • Employability of marketing graduates with digital marketing certifications was enhanced – annual graduate employment survey.

(*Continued*)

Table 5. (Continued).

Case	Category	Student Assessment	Under-pinning Theory	Skills Embedded	Method of Assessment (Extract from Rubric)	Educator's observations of the authentic assessment process
4	Digital, authentic and creative	Engaging with 1. sustainability literacy test (Sulitest) and reflecting on the learning experience; 2. creation of a short video aimed at practitioners connecting a sustainability issue with marketing practice and offering actionable business recommendations; and 3. sharing of their video online through LinkedIn to create engagement with practitioners.	Avelar et al. (2019), Cunliffe (2002), Décamps et al. (2017), Nerstrom (2014), Storey et al. (2019), and Boud et al. (2013)	Sustainability literacy; reflection; new career choices; emotional intelligence; interpersonal effectiveness; the ability to collaborate with others **Learning skills** Critical thinking Creativity Collaboration Communication **Literacy skills** Information Technology **Life skills** Flexibility Leadership Initiative Social skills	**Learning skills** **Critical thinking** Reflection piece: depth and quality of reflection, insights covering required points, reflection on learning. Video piece: comprehensive and constructive review of a well-selected issue; evidence of ability to organise and express ideas and arguments; application of concepts in connection to industry; quality action-oriented recommendations **Creativity** Reflection piece – writing in a creative and fluent manner Video piece – combining concepts, industry and SDGs; video creation with clear visuals, details and well thought-through layout **Communication** Reflection piece – communication in a reflective style Video piece – communicating message with professional audience; evidence of sharing with relevant audience & engagement by intended audience	• Peer learning through students sharing their educational outputs via their social media sites. • Reflections & understanding of sustainability in broader terms after taking the Sulitest (environmental and social issues). • Reflections contained a range of emotional reactions, from being shocked, surprised and feeling privileged. • Students also signalled intentions to take action, not only in their own professional and personal lives, but to influence others on the need for change.

(*Continued*)

Table 5. (Continued).

Case	Category	Student Assessment	Under-pinning Theory	Skills Embedded	Method of Assessment (Extract from Rubric)	Educator's observations of the authentic assessment process
					Literacy skills **Information** Reflection piece - Engagement with sustainability literacy and reflecting on own literacy levels & gaps **Technology** Use of video-making tools, sharing of video online through LinkedIn **Life skills – not directly verbalised in rubrics** **Flexibility/Initiative –** the learners were able to make a choice of 1. which issues coming from sustainability literacy test they wanted to reflect on; 2. what topic and industry to focus on; 3. what videomaking tools to use & how to construct video (e.g. subtitles/voiceover) **Leadership –** posting video, use of tags, taking time to respond/ promote the video **Social skills** – communication of message through video, and engagement with professional audience online through LinkedIn	

Table 6. Summary of Skills Developed and Assessed.

Twelve 21st Century Skills		Case Studies 1	2	3	4
Learning Skills	Critical Thinking	x	x	x	x
	Creativity	x	x		x
	Collaboration		x		
	Communication	x	x		x
Literacy Skill	Information	x	x		x
	Media		x	x	
	Technology	x	x	x	x
Life Skills	Flexibility				x
	Leadership				x
	Initiative		x		x
	Productivity	x	x	x	x
	Social Skills				x
Total		6	9	4	10

they had applied the principles of store design to their own project. The technology skills were developed in a range of different ways and forms including mastering of the software packages such as CANVA (a graphic design software in case study 1), Kahoot (a gaming software in case study 2), Google Skillshops (an online training site for Google tools in case study 3). In case study 4, whilst some direction and support was provided, the students undertook largely self-directed learning related to creation and editing of short videos, mimicking real-world practice. All the tasks assessed in the case studies were tasks which would be conducted in practice, such as analysing a brand's marketing strategy, designing and creating a retail store, developing a digital marketing strategy, and developing sustainable strategic marketing solutions.

The next most common set of skills that were developed by the students and assessed through marking rubrics were creativity, information gathering and productivity. In three case studies (1, 2 & 4), creativity was considered in relation to how the students portrayed their messages, such as the layouts of their work and the use of visuals to communicate their messages. Additionally, creativity was also assessed in relation to how creative the content of their work was. In case study 2, students were assessed on how they had applied the principles of store design in an innovative way, not just how the design was being communicated. In case study 4, students were assessed on how creatively they had applied the relevant concepts to provide innovative solutions and recommendations to practitioners and industry representatives.

Students were expected to gather information from a range of peer-reviewed and reliable sources, both academic and non-academic, to use to develop their assignments in case studies 1, 2 and 4. This required the students to develop both their research skills and, their critical thinking skills to determine the relevance and quality of the sources they would use. In case study 4, students were evaluated on the number and quality of references used in their work. Productivity was developed by the successful completion of the assignment on case studies 1 and 2, in case study 3 within a defined time period.

Use of media and initiative were developed and assessed in half of the case studies. In both case studies 2 and 3, students were required to demonstrate their ability in accessing, analysing and using a range of digital media including real-world business applications such as Google Skillshops or Canva. In case study 3, students gained digital marketing certifications as evidence of their proficiency with a range of media. In case studies 2 and 4, initiative was required in the design of the artefact created for the

assessment. In case study 2, students were required to develop a new concept design and in case study 4, students needed to decide on the specific topic and industry for their video as well as the design software tool for the video content.

There were five skills collaboration, flexibility, leadership, and social skills, that were only developed and assessed in one of the case studies. Case study 2 was a group assignment which required the consistent collaboration of the group for all stages of the assessments. Only case study 4 assessed the skills of flexibility, leadership, and social skills. Flexibility was developed and assessed through the choice of topic, industry and video design linking to use of initiative above. Students developed their leadership and social skills through the promotion of their videos to an external professional audience via LinkedIn, which also involved the use of tagging and responding to comments.

From our own reflections on the different assessments, all of them developed additional skills that were not formally assessed and therefore have not been highlighted above, such as leadership within the groups for case study 2. Another example includes case study 4, as even though media literacy skills were not directly assessed, the students developed these skills while creating short videos and setting up their LinkedIn profiles. We consider this further in the discussion below.

Discussion

As discussed earlier in the paper, the call for HEI's to embed 21st century skills into the curriculum is nearly three decades ongoing. The event of a global pandemic forced HE to be more creative with assessment design, using technology to support more innovative assessment. Most institutes encouraged lecturers to upskill their own digital skills, and provided additional resources to facilitate digital platforms to enable online student assessment methods. This allowed us, as marketing lecturers, to design more digitally-led assignments with outcomes that built on multiple 21st century skills. It is important to highlight that while working via Teams and Zoom, and utilising the LMS (Learning Management System) functionality has become standard practice in 2022, this was somewhat novel in university spaces in 2020. Likewise, the case studies in this paper were deemed novel just a year ago. Now they are starting to become standard practice. This is satisfying and shows the wider adoption of best practice. However, with the return to in-person teaching, there is also a tendency towards returning to traditional assessments and exams. This paper demonstrates that we need to maintain momentum in assessment innovations, and we illustrate how this can occur.

We have presented how the four case studies were designed and formulated into a range of assessments that met the four criteria for authentic assessments in different ways. We have also presented how these assignments developed and assessed a range of 21st century skills. As part of our discussion, we now reflect on the development of these authentic assessments, specifically on how we, as marketing educators, needed to be creative in our design and how using digital forms of assessment helped in the design. We also reflect on the skills developed, both those we assessed and those we did not, and the challenges we faced in assessing some of the skills which could potentially be perceived as a barrier by colleagues wishing to design their own authentic assessments.

In line with Gibb (2014), all of the assessments were designed along the three interconnected touchpoints – personal development (being reflective and evaluative), participation in learning (being cognitively challenging), and success in employment (reflecting industry practice and the development of the twelve 21st century skills), which then resulted in both personal and professional development for the students (Harvey & Dodd, 2021). The design of the assessments provided the students with an experiential learning experience, and by relating their learning to a real-world context, this experience was more likely to make them receptive to further new learning experiences and different forms of authentic assessment later in their programmes. Providing a student-centred active, authentic and experiential learning experience that reflected workplace practices was vital, as this motivates the students to engage and take ownership of their learning, such as choosing which digital certificate to pursue (Reyes et al., 2012; Royle & Laing, 2014).

As can be seen from the discussion of our cases thus far, moving from designing a traditional assessment to an authentic assessment requires academics to think differently about the purpose of their assessments. Thinking about the four main criteria for authentic assessments requires academics to consider more than just the subject-related learning outcomes. From our collective experiences, it requires academics to be creative in their assessment design itself and to think about the additional support students will need when undertaking these different types of assessments (Paul & Mukhopadhyay, 2005). Academics need to consider the types of tasks marketing professionals are undertaking and then think creatively about how these can be replicated in an assignment while meeting the learning outcomes.

The authors also recognise that the proposed shift to authentic assessment may well raise concerns with some academics, who may perceive authentic assessment to lack the rigour that is so commonly associated with traditional assessment, and who may well argue that traditional assessments do meet the cognitively challenging, reflective and evaluative aspects of assessment. Whilst recognising such concerns, the authors propose that it is the modelling on practices from industry that create value for students, and that through careful and well-thought-out design practices conducted with integrity, academic rigour is not lost through authentic assessment.

As presented above, the four case studies developed and assessed up to nine of the twelve 21st century skills, and across all the case studies all of the skills were included. However, from our own collective reflections, it was noted that students were developing some of the remaining skills even though these were not being formally assessed. In some cases, all of the students were developing these additional skills, such as in case studies 1 and 4, where students were collaborating with each other as part of the reviewing of and reflecting on each other's work before it was presented to an external audience. In other cases, only some of the students would have developed some of the additional skills; for example, in case study 2, some of the students would have developed leadership skills if they were appointed the leader of their group.

In addition, one characteristic that was common to all of our assessments was the inclusion of some form of digital element, whether this was in the form of the assessment itself, such as the production of a video, or a poster using a particular software, or as part of the learning process itself. Including a digital element can fulfil a number of purposes. Firstly, it can help to develop several the twelve 21st century skills, especially, but not only,

the three literacy skills which aid students in developing their digital citizenship (Becker et al., 2017). Secondly, it can be used to replicate this real-world experience by having students replicate tasks of a marketing professional such as content creation, and finally, it can provide students with something that can showcase their digital literacy skills to future employers (Tomlinson, 2010).

On reflecting on why some skills were assessed and others were not, it became clear that some skills are much harder to include in an assessment rubric and for students to evidence in their assessments. For example, one highly sought-after skill in the workplace is that of empathy. In fact, empathy is the most sought-after leadership skill according to Forbes (Brower, 2021), yet how to teach and assess this in marketing education would pose a significant challenge.

Designing assessments with marketing practice in mind will go some way towards bridging the gap between theory and practice. Another suggested approach would be that rather than the onus being solely on marketing academics, instead appoint an assessment advisory board. Such a board, comprising of marketing academics and practitioners, would be very well positioned to advise and participate in the co-creation of authentic assessments. With academics and marketing practitioners working together to co-create meaningful and impactful assignments, that are relevant to industry whilst at the same time meeting the key learning outcomes for the programme, this would be of significant value in ensuring authenticity of assessments.

We also recommend academics collectively share their authentic assessments in the marketing discipline to create a national/international repository of case studies. Such assessments could then be replicated across institutions, providing students and academics with tried and tested assessment designs.

Future research could include longitudinal studies to examine how students found that these practice-based assessments prepared them for the workforce, and thus measure the impact of authentic assessment on employability skills.

In hindsight, although all cases captured some data through student evaluations, a more thorough approach to collecting data could be employed. Such an approach could examine how students perceived the assessment and how this impacted their own sense of workplace preparedness as a result of participation in the assessment. For instance, case study 4 did require reflective writing pieces and this provided meaningful student insights. We would propose reflective journaling as a requirement to authentic assessment as it is a useful tool for gauging the impact of the learning experience. Given the diversity of student cohorts, we reflect that EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) is also a consideration, and further research to investigate how offering authentic assessments supports inclusivity is needed.

Further research in authentic assessment could extend into the realm of a study to design rubrics that appropriately assess students' employability skills. This paper exposes the difficulty in assessing such skills, but also the necessity to do so. Such research will be invaluable to marketing academics and the effort to prepare work-ready graduates. With the recent development of ChatGPT and the concerns raised around academic integrity, future research could be carried out to assess how authentic assessments could be used to overcome the challenges with AI. Given that employers are seeking students with skills that cannot be automated, there is an opportunity here to embed authentic assessments within programmes. Additionally, further research is

needed on how to embed the use of AI programmes like ChatGPT into the design of authentic assessments to ensure students are prepared for their use within the marketing industry.

Summary

Given that the call for embedding employability into curricula is ongoing, we offer a solution to ensure that we develop students' employability skills and begin to end the critique of HEIs. We have argued that as HEIs and marketing educators, we need to take some ownership of this problem. Therefore, we demonstrate that we have indeed taken ownership of this problem, and we offer practical exemplars of good practice around how to create authentic assessments.

Furthermore, we argue that this paper helps to close the research gap on the need for further research on authenticity in assessment. We have reflected on how and why traditional assessments are not enabling students to graduate with the desired employability skills, and recognise that indeed some academics may be concerned that authentic equates to lack of rigour. Importantly, to address this, we offer a diverse set of case examples to showcase the variety of ways in which authenticity can be implemented and assessed to ensure that we uphold the academic standards required. Recognising that changing the format of assessments can require academics to think differently, we provide inspiration around the creation of authentic assessments; indeed, we suggest that as academics, we need to be creative ourselves. We have also reflected on and demonstrated how such assessments go some way towards providing marketing students with some of the key skills required in today's workplace.

As organisations evolve and change, so must our response to student assessment, to ensure that students graduate with the desired employability skills. We demonstrate, via the four case studies, that authentic assessments start to resolve this issue by enabling and supporting students to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for marketing roles. As we emerge from the pandemic and the rapid adoption of new ways of working, and students needing 21st century employability skills, it is vital that as marketing educators, we do not lose the momentum gained and continue to innovate our assessments.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Appendix A. Outline of the Case Studies as Authentic Assessment

Case Study 1	
Title:	***Engaging Students Using A Poster Assessment for an Undergraduate Strategic Marketing Course***
Overview of authentic assessment:	This case examines the use of e-posters to assess a undergraduate class in Strategic Marketing. In light of the requirement to link theoretical constructs to practical situations and the visual nature of many of the taught frameworks, the use of a poster lends itself well to this form of assessment. As well as an innovative form of assessment, the use of a poster, through the requirement to produce a piece of work which has a clear link to professional practice, may be categorised as an authentic form of assessment.
Digital Technologies utilised	Canva – an online design and publishing tool
Knowledge applied: (marketing)	Use of various strategic marketing tools including SWOT, PESTEL, Porter's Five Forces, Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning, 4/7Ps
Problem solved:	Development of a strategic marketing plan for a real brand based on real-world data.
Personal Development/ Employability Skills developed:	Computer skills Communication skills Problem-solving skills Analytical skills Digital literacy skills Visual representation skills
Real-world applicability/ Relevance to Marketing Graduate Roles:	In-depth analysis of a brand and its strategic planning process. Visual representation of real-world data using graphic design software as would be applied in the workplace.
Case Study 2	
Title:	***Retail Marketing and Store Design: An Experiential Learning Approach***
Overview of authentic assessment:	The rationale for this assignment was two-fold. Firstly, that traditional assignments e.g. case studies are not reflective of current industry practice and therefore not authentic. Retail is a fast-moving industry that constantly innovates e.g. Glossier's digital and experience-based store or Amazon Fresh's Just Walk Out technology. Secondly, traditional assignments limit the ability of students to gain industry-ready skills. This assignment therefore offers students the opportunity to 'behave' like store designers, consider what stores of the future should look like, and replicate industry tasks. This assignment focusses on developing students' creative and digital skills that are needed for the future workplace and mirrors industry practice. The assignment uses an experiential learning-based approach to enable skill development.

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Digital Technologies utilised	Research digital and physical retailscapes Discern emerging digital technologies for online retail UX design
Knowledge applied: (marketing)	Digital presentation Writing, editing and presentation skills Analysing retail environments Awareness of new retail technologies and capabilities Servicescapes Technology Acceptance Model VR/AR Phygitalisation Brandscapes Customer Experiences
Problem solved:	Forward-thinking retail graduates creating prototypes of future retailscapes
Personal Development/ Employability Skills developed:	Writing skills Teamwork skills Computer skills Problem-solving skills Communication skills Digital literacy skills Creative design skills
Real-world applicability/ Relevance to Marketing Graduate Roles:	Deeper understanding of the changing landscape of digital and physical retail and how technology is revolutionising the customer journey Wider awareness of innovative digital technologies in retail spaces Better prepared to enter careers in an omnichannel retailscape Students have evidence (in the form of the digital presentation) to showcase to retailers
Case Study 3	
Title:	***Using gamified online exercise to enhance the pedagogical value of digital marketing certifications in marketing curriculum***
Overview of authentic assessment:	This case illustrates the combined use of authentic assessments, online games, and digital marketing certifications in digital marketing subjects such as Search Engine Marketing, Social Media Marketing, and E-commerce. While authentic assessments are found to enhance students' learning experience in the application of marketing knowledge in realistic situations (O'Connor et al., 2019), digital marketing certifications are adopted to complement authentic assessment and facilitate students to catch up with the fast-paced digital world in self-directed learning. Gamified online quizzes are conducted throughout the semester to motivate self-learning of digital marketing certifications and engage students to learn in a pleasurable way either in face-to-face or online classes.
Digital Technologies utilised	We used game-based learning platforms (e.g. Kahoot), Google Ads Certifications, and Meta Blueprint Certification sites.
Knowledge applied (marketing):	Development, implementation, and evaluation of online advertising campaigns over various digital ad platforms (Google and Meta ads).
Problem solved:	Basic operation of Google and Meta ad account. Use of Google Analytics and Social Media analytics to evaluate ad campaign effectiveness Self-learning skills to master the everchanging online ad landscape and tools
Personal Development/ Employability Skills developed:	Digital skills Digital literacy skills Independent working and self-learning ICT literacy skills
Real-world applicability/ Relevance to Marketing Graduate Roles:	To complete the assignments, students should be able to acquire self-learning skills in using digital advertising platforms provided by major ad platforms such as Google & Meta. Students should demonstrate how to solve marketing problems in the digital era and use Martech (marketing technologies) to deliver respective marketing objectives for real-world companies.

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Case Study 4	
Title:	***Empowering responsible and sustainably-aware business graduates through digital authentic assessment***
Overview of authentic assessment:	Our pedagogical initiative is designed with the broad aim of enhancing sustainability literacy among business students using innovative digital tools as part of authentic assessment strategy. This included completion of: a sustainability literacy test through the UN-supported Sulitest platform; a written reflection on learning utilising the DIEP reflective model; creation of a video connecting a sustainability issue with business practice and the offering of responsible business recommendations; sharing of students' videos on relevant social media platforms to create engagement with practitioners
Digital Technologies utilised	Students utilised digital platforms including the university's LMS Brightspace, the UN-supported Sulitest platform, digital video-making tools (e.g. PowToon, Biteable, Animoto), and social media including LinkedIn.
Knowledge applied: (marketing)	Creating video content for social media consumption Storytelling – creating compelling content Engaging UN Sustainable Development Goals – integral to future business practices
Problem solved:	Researched sustainability issue and offered responsible solutions for business Developed own reflective/critical thinking on the sustainability issues explored – deeper self-learning
Personal Development/ Employability Skills developed:	Communication skills Leadership skills Teamwork skills Interpersonal skills Self-management skills Computer skills Problem-solving skills Digital literacy skills Content creation skills Writing skills Storytelling
Real-world applicability/ Relevance to Marketing Graduate Roles:	To complete this assignment, students engage in self-directed learning to explore the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to share their insights with peers. These students will be graduating into companies that need to be aligning their business strategy with the SDGs. Our sustainable literate graduates will be equipped to recognise the SDGs, and to understand the responsibility that both citizens and organisations have in achieving these global goals. They can be the changemakers in their future places of employment.